

*The following was prepared by Steve Wiser, FAIA, who has researched over 200 houses in the metro Louisville region.*

### **Previous Homeowner and When House was Built search:**

One of the simplest ways to find previous owners of a house is to search the previous City Street Directories. By reviewing these former 'phone books', you can determine who owned a house during what periods, as well as perhaps finding out the occupation of former owners (early City Directories contained places of employment of the owners). Since you most likely may not know the names of the previous owners, these city directories not only list houses by owner, but also by the street address (in the back section of the directory). Thus, you can search the house owner by looking at the street address over various years in the past.

You can also determine when a house was built. If a house exists in one year, such as 1890, but not in year 1889, then most likely the house was built in 1889 and therefore included in the next year's directory, year 1890.

A more complicated method is to use Deed Records which are located at the old County Courthouse (aka 'Metro City Hall') but this requires a lot of time, frustration, and seeking help. So, City Directories are a good place to start your search.

Of note: when searching City Directories: street address numbers were changed in 1909. Thus, if the house you are researching might have been built prior to 1909, you will need to know this pre-1909 street address number as well. How do you do that? You will need to go to either a branch library or the main downtown library and look it up the digital city directories that are contained on the library computer system. Note: only city directories between 1832 and 1923 are digitized (and some in-between years are missing from the system). After 1923, it is best to go to the main downtown library on the second floor of original building (enter off York Street) and look at the 'hard copy' city directories that are there on the shelves. If you need assistance, just ask the friendly librarian sitting at the 2nd floor info desk.

Important FYI: You will need a current library card. On the library card is a number that is associated with the bar code. Enter this number when requested to do so on the computer screen. And, you'll need to know your password. If you do not know your password, you can have one emailed to you by clicking 'forgot' password. Ask the librarian for assistance if needed.

Here is 'step-by-step' process of finding house owners, occupations, and when built via the library computer system using City Directories: Click on the 'green' tree icon (Kentucky History & Genealogy) then click on 'City Directories'. Then find and click on the 1909 city directory. Then, go to the back section of the city directory, which begins on page 1841, where the houses are listed by street number and not by name (assuming that you may not know the name of the owner in 1909). Find the street in which the house you are seeking is located, then the current street number. For instance, 1442 S. Third Street. Write down the name of the owner (Kaye, W H). then, go to the front section of the city directory where houses are listed by name. (Kaye, W H is listed at 1632 S. Third – which is the pre-1909 address. The 'new' number, 1442, is in

*The following was prepared by Steve Wiser, FAIA, who has researched over 200 houses in the metro Louisville region.*

parenthesis). Now, you can research prior to 1909 for the house owners at the 'old' street address.

Also, of note: street names have also been changed over the years. For list comparing old street names to new, go to page 859 of the Louisville Encyclopedia (c. 2001, editor John Kleber)

Tip: you can scan quickly thru PDFs of the city directories by typing in the page number in the menu bar 'page number' location.

### More Methods for House Research:

1. **Internet:** A quick Google of the street address might pop up something.
2. **Maps:** You can find out who owned the property in 1858 by checking out the 1858 map of Louisville (google 'Louisville map 1858', which is found on the 'Library of Congress' website. Then use the 'buttons' to zoom in /out of the general area where house is located)

If your house is in the urban limits of Louisville, then you may want to check out the Sanborn maps. Sanborn maps contain great histories of what was built where and what the surrounding neighborhood looked like. Sanborn maps are also contained on the Library website for free access. From the LFPL.org homepage, click on 'Research Tools', then click on 'Genealogy & Local History' link. Then, scroll down to find the 'Sanborn Map' section. Again, you'll need library card number and your password to access. Once onto the webpage, click 'Browse' and navigate from there filling in the appropriate data. Once the Sanborn map you are seeking pops up, then click on the 'Index' Sheet. Once this sheet pops up, you can 'scroll' around to find the street you are looking for, and then note the 'sheet' number on which it is indicated. Next, click on the back arrow to return to the overall Sanborn map sheets to find the sheet number you are seeking. Note: there might be different Volumes to a year for the Sanborn maps. For instance, the 1905 Sanborn has 4 volumes and you might need to check out a different volume for the area of Louisville you are seeking.

3. **Newspaper:** the archives of the Courier-Journal are on-line for free. You can access this via your own computer by clicking on [www.LFPL.org](http://www.LFPL.org); then click on 'Research Tools' on the left-side menu bar; then, find 'Newspapers' and click on that link; then, scroll down to find 'Courier-Journal Historical' and click on that link; on the next webpage, enter your library card number in the 'Username' box and your Password in the 'Password' box. If you do not know your password, click on 'forgot Your Password' and one will be emailed to your email address. Once you have gained access to the Courier-Journal historical archives, you next need to select which Courier Journal archive to research. Note: there are several possibilities: The first is for the years 2008 to current year; the next is for microfilm from 2008 to current year, and the third is for years 1830 to 2000.

*The following was prepared by Steve Wiser, FAIA, who has researched over 200 houses in the metro Louisville region.*

You most likely will want to use the third option which is years 1830 to 2000. Then, in the 'search' engine, you can enter the street address of the residence you are seeking, as well as previous owner names. There are a variety of terms you can use to fine tune your search. Just keep using different terms and hopefully the data you seek will pop up. *Remember: In 1909, street numbers were changed. So, be sure to enter both the current street address as well as the street address prior to 1909.*

4. **Photos of house:** There are only a few places that contain archives of historic photos. Either the U of L photo archives, which is located in the lower level of the Ekstrom Library on the U of L Belknap campus; or the Filson Historical Society. You may also try the Courier-Journal newspaper which now sells its historic photos. Another possible suggestion would be descendants of former owners of the house you are researching. Or, perhaps a neighborhood history book might contain a photo.
5. **Neighborhood historian:** most neighborhoods have long-time residents who may know the history of the property you are researching.
6. **Books:**
  - a. **Neighborhood history books:**

There might already be a history written on the house you are researching or related information. Many of these books are contained at the downtown library on the second floor. As a librarian at the 2nd floor info desk for assistance in finding such neighborhood history books.

For example, the Valley Station Women's club wrote a book in 1959 on the Early History of Valley Station that provided many house descriptions in southwest Jefferson County. Another similar book is 'Beautiful Crescent Hill' by the Crescent Hill Improvement Club that was reprinted by the Crescent Hill Community Council. It contains many original photos of houses in the neighborhood as well as some info such as who designed the houses.
  - b. 'A Place in Time' Neighborhood book by the Courier Journal
  - c. Stratton Hammon book by Winfrey Blackburn
  - d. Country Houses of Louisville by Winfrey Blackburn & Scott Gill
  - e. House series books by Steve Wiser
  - f. Louisville history books by Sam Thomas
  - g. There are many neighborhood history books in the reference section on the 2nd floor of the downtown library. Just inquire at the 2nd floor info desk.
  - h. Also click on [www.ArcadiaPublishing.com](http://www.ArcadiaPublishing.com) and use search engine to find metro Louisville neighborhood histories that this national firm has produced. Many area neighborhoods are featured in Arcadia books.
7. **Downtown Library:** the 2nd floor of the downtown library, of the original building (enter off of York Street), has many sources for researching houses. Tip: best time to

*The following was prepared by Steve Wiser, FAIA, who has researched over 200 houses in the metro Louisville region.*

visit is Sunday afternoon, when there is free on-street parking as well as weekday evenings after 7 pm. Plus, the library staff is not too busy at these times and can readily assist you. PS: if you do have to pay at a meter, then park in the library lot off of York Street. The meter cost is much less than the on-street meters, and the money in this lot goes directly to the library!